

**Safer & Stronger Communities  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**27 February 2023**



**County Durham Youth Justice Service –  
Overview, Performance, Service  
Developments and Improvement Plan  
2022/23**

**Report of:**

**John Pearce, Corporate Director, Children & Young People’s  
Services**

**Councillor Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children &  
Young People’s Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report presents an overview of the Youth Justice Service, including the latest Service/Partnership performance. It highlights key achievements during the previous year, along with areas for improvement and development which the service will be focussed upon during the next year.

**Executive Summary**

- 2 Youth Offending Services (referred to as Youth Justice Service in Durham) are statutory partnerships, established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, with the principal aim of preventing offending by children and young people. Local Authorities are responsible for establishing a ‘Youth Offending Team’. The Local Authority, Police, Probation Service (PS) and Integrated Care Boards (ICB) are statutorily required to assist in their funding and operation (through the secondment of staff). In Durham, additional, non-statutory, funding/support is provided by the Police & Crime Commissioner and Public Health.

- 3 The Youth Justice Service supervises those young people whom the police have decided to deal with 'formally', either by means of an out-of-court disposal or by charging the young person to court. The role of the Youth Justice Service is to:
- Assess the suitability of, and provide relevant interventions for, young people receiving an 'Out-of-Court Disposal' (Pre-Caution Disposal, Youth Caution & Conditional Caution)
  - Case-manage young people remanded on bail and in custody whilst awaiting court hearings
  - Advise the court on sentencing
  - Assess all young people sentenced by the court, manage the sentence and provide relevant interventions to prevent offending
  - Provide support to the families of young people who offend
  - Support all victims (young and adult) of youth crime and support young victims of all crime.
- 4 Key points about our current performance show that there were continued falls in first time entrants to the youth justice system and a low level for use of custody. The latest reoffending rate for young people (those who reoffend within 12 months of their last caution/sentence) shows Durham to be lower than the north east average and on a par with the national average.
- 5 As well as the performance covered above, during 2022 key achievements were:
- Working with 142 victims in restorative approaches
  - Young people who offend undertaking 1,247 hours of unpaid work in communities
  - Supporting 52 young victims of crime
  - Supporting 32 parents of young people who offend
  - Working with 52 community volunteers to provide support and mentoring for young people and families
- 6 Service improvement priorities for 2023 are:
- (a) Further improving the interventions we complete with young people and the quality of our assessments and intervention plans;

- (b) Targeting our resources on those young people committing the most offences;
- (c) Ensuring we listen and respond to what young people and their families are telling us;
- (d) Continue to improve our service to victims – both adults and young people;
- (e) Ensuring volunteering, by both adults and young people, is a key component of the work we undertake with young people and victims;
- (f) Ensuring that case management systems and administration support provide the highest quality support to staff and managers in the delivery of services to courts, communities and young people.

7 During August 2022, the Service received its full inspection by HMI Probation, the final report being published in November 2022. The overall rating for the Service was 'Requires Improvement'. Whilst this is a disappointing outcome, the inspection also highlighted 'outstanding' work with young people who present a high risk of harm and those in custody and 'good' work with young people in court. Feedback collected by HMI Probation from young people, families, victims, Magistrates, volunteers and partner services was entirely positive about the service. Key areas for improvement were in respect of our work with young people dealt with 'out of-court', particularly our assessments of risk and need. We have produced an Inspection Improvement Plan (in addition to the Service Improvement Plan noted above) following the recommendations in the inspection report. At the time of writing, we are awaiting approval of the plan by HMI Probation.

8 HMI Probation have included a section on our work in Durham with young people in custody and resettlement after custody in their effective practice guide which was published on 13 February 2023.

9 A key development for 2023 is the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) funded Turnaround programme. County Durham will receive £190,000 per year, for the next two years, to improve the quality of our work with young people who receive an out-of-court disposal (currently referred to as the Pre-Caution Disposal in Durham). The process we have operated in Durham for a number of years, was used by the MoJ as an example of the type of programme they were encouraging other services to develop. Therefore, we are well-placed in Durham to operate this programme. We will be using the funding to develop greater links with the One Point Service, and other early help services, to ensure that we are able to intervene earlier with young people

coming to the attention of the police for the first times and work with the whole family, including siblings.

## **Recommendation(s)**

- 10 The Safer & Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:
  - (i) Note and comment on the contents of this report and the work of the service

## **Background**

- 10 County Durham Youth Justice Service (CDYJS), a statutory multi-agency partnership, is part of Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council, and is managed by them on behalf of the partnership. Active links are maintained at both strategic and operational level to Criminal Justice, Community Safety and Children, Young People and Families arenas.
- 11 CDYJS is accountable to a multi-agency Management Board, chaired by the Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children, Durham County Council. The membership and terms of reference of the Management Board are reviewed annually. Membership is at appropriate Senior Officer level.
- 12 CDYJS is line-managed, on behalf of the partnership, by Durham County Council. The Service is part of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children Service (EHIVCS).
- 13 40 staff are employed by Durham County Council on behalf of the partnership and 12 full time equivalent staff are seconded/deployed from partners (Durham Constabulary, National Probation Service, North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT), Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT), Tees Esk and Wear Valleys Mental Health Trust (TEWV) and Humankind. In addition, there are 52 community volunteers working with the service.

## **Current Performance Report:**

### **(a) Performance against National Outcome Measures**

- **First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System (FTEs):**

The latest reported rate of FTEs per 100,000 10-17 years population in County Durham is **113**, a 35% reduction on the previous year.

This is a further reduction from the previous year and is significantly lower than both the national and North East regional rates.

- **Re-offending**

Latest Ministry of Justice (MoJ) data shows a re-offending rate of **33.9%**. This is a reduction of 8 percentage points from the previous year performance.

This rate is lower than the regional rate and on a par with the national rate.

- **Use of Custody**

**Custodial Sentences:**

The rate of young people receiving a custodial sentence, per 1,000 10-17 years is **0.13**, a reduction of 50% on the previous year. This is on a par with both the National and North East with rates. On each occasion a young person is sentenced to custody, the work of CDYJS is reviewed to ensure all appropriate work was undertaken.

**Remand Bed Nights: 89**

The bed nights refer to just 5 young people who all, ultimately, received a custodial sentence.

- **Work with Victims, including Young Victims:**

During 2022, our work with the victims of youth crime has engaged **142** victims in restorative approaches. Our work with young people who are the victims of youth crime has provided dedicated support and an opportunity to re-build and restore confidence. The support group for young victims of all crime ('With Youth in Mind') has continued to develop and is now working with an average of **35** young people at any one time throughout the year (annual total of **52** young people). Young people who offend have also engaged in **1,247** hours of unpaid work in and across communities in County Durham as a

means of reparation. Items made by young people as part of reparation has benefitted a number of charities, including the Royal British Legion, Autism Awareness and local care homes.

## **The Voice of Young People, Families, Victims & Communities**

- 13 CDYJS ensures that the views of young people, families, victims and communities continue to shape the things we do by:
- A structured process of feedback, for all groups, on the services we deliver
  - A Service consultation group of young people who are victims of crime
  - Structured feedback and support for community volunteers
  - Community volunteer oversight of the work of the Service
  - Elected Member discussions with the portfolio holder and presentation of reports to full County Council and Scrutiny
- 14 As a result of this work (and evidence that consultation has led to changes in the way we work), the Service has achieved national awards for our work with parents and our work with young victims. We have also been awarded 'quality marks' for 'Investing in Children' and 'Investing in Volunteers'.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications:**

Statutory requirements placed on CDYJS and the Management Board include; complying with the statutory requirements laid out in s.38 to 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and other relevant sections of the Act; complying with National Standards for Youth Justice (including returning the annual National Standards audit); submitting required data to the YJB in adherence with the relevant YJB data recording guidance and approving the annual Youth Justice Plan.

### **Finance:**

CDYJS budget comprises partnership funding, YJB funding and specific grant funding. The budget allocation is reviewed annually by CDYJS Management Board and all partners (Police, Probation, Health (ICB) and Local Authority) agree funding contributions for the following year. Under the terms of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998; DCC, Durham Constabulary, the Probation Service and ICB are required to both contribute staff and provide funding for a pooled budget for operating costs.

### **Consultation:**

CDYJS Management Board, partners, staff, young people, parents/carers, victims and communities are regularly consulted.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty:**

CDYJS is committed to meeting the needs of the young people, families and victims with whom we work. All staff have undertaken specialist diversity training for youth offending, speech, language and communication needs training and, in addition, case managers have undertaken specialist diversity training for assessments. Diversity issues are a specific category on the checklist used by managers to countersign assessments and intervention plans.

### **Climate Change:**

None.

**Human Rights:**

Not applicable.

**Crime and Disorder:**

The statutory function of CDYJS partnership is the prevention of offending by children and young people (Crime and Disorder Act 1998).

**Staffing:**

None

**Accommodation:**

All managers and staff in CDYJS have their main base in DCC, Crook.

**Risk:**

None

**Procurement:**

Not applicable.